DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 780 - CE 065 005

AUTHOR	Pomerance, Anita
TITLE	An Experiential Whole-Language Inservice Workshop for Adult Literacy Tutors and Learners. Final Report. Fiscal Year 1990-1991. Project Number: 99-1001.
INSTITUTION	Center for Literacy, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jun 91
NOTE	25p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Reading Programs; Behavioral Objectives; *Experiential Learning; *Literacy Education; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Teacher Student Relationship; *Tutors; *Whole Language Approach; *Workshops

ABSTRACT

A workshop for adult literacy tutors and learners was developed on the basis of the findings of a telephone survey of 45 tutors and presented to a total of 51 tutors and 48 students. The workshop, which was based on an experiential whole-language approach, was structured in a series of three 2-hour sessions. During the first session, tutors and students focused on selecting reading materials and exploring and trying out various ways of reading together. Session 2 covered establishing writing topics, understanding the language experience approach, and dealing with barriers such as spelling. In the third session, staff members elicited participants' current word identification strategies, taught new word identification strategies through opportunistic instruction based on reading whole texts, helped identify and plan for work toward using real-life materials to reach student goals, and helped students and tutors create and use portfolios of student-selected work as an ongoing method of evaluating progress. Interviews of workshop participants conducted 1 month after the sessions and a comparative analysis of randomly selected tutor-learner pairs who had and had not participated in the workshops established that workshop participation resulted in more hours of tutor-student interaction. (Appended are workshop session agendas and a literacy goals checklist.) (MN)

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An Experiential Whole-Language Inservice Workshop for Adult Literacy Tutors and Learners

Final Report

Anita Pomerance, Tutor Training Coordinator

The Center for Literacy
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Center For Literacy

CE 065 005

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AUG 22 1991
DIVISION OF ADULT EDUCATION

June, 1991

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An Experiential Whole-Language Inservice Workshop for Adult Literacy Tutors and Learners

Anita Pomerance, Tutor Training Coordinator
The Center for Literacy

Fiscal Year 1990-1991

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Federal Funds: $4,910.00

Project Number: 99-1001

The activity which is the subject of this report was supported in part by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennyslvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement by these agencies should be inferred.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....3

Introduction.....4

The Problem.....6

Goals and Objectives.....6

Procedures Employed.....8

Objectives Met.....11

Objectives Not Met.....11

Evaluation.....12

Distribution of the Findings.....15

Conclusions and Recommendations.....16

Bibliography.....18

ABSTRACT

This innovative tutor-learner inservice workshop was designed to provide support to volunteer tutors of literacy and their adult learners. It provided a refresher course which made concepts of whole-language reading and writing instruction and collaborative learning accessible to the participants through hands-on experience. The inservice workshops were innovative in that learners participated in these inservice workshops with their tutors, and that they provided modeling by the instructor followed by hands-on experience by the participants. Forty-eight tutors and 51 students received inservice support. The workshops consisted of a series of three two-hour sessions which were distributed among five areas of the city.

According to immediate responses during the sessions and responses to interviews, the workshops resulted in the subsequent use of the materials and approaches presented. Workshop planners were gratified to find that during the last month of the project year (June) the workshop participants logged a higher number of instructional hours than did a control group who did not attend the workshops.

This project should be instructive for adult literacy learners, volunteer tutors, trainers and coordinators of volunteer tutors and other providers of adult literacy services.

Introduction

This project implemented a staff inservice workshop based on current research and modeled on exemplary practice for inservice support of volunteer literacy tutors and adult learners. The impetus to develop this new inservice workshop came from reports from coordinators that tutors tended to focus upon skill-based materials, to avoid teaching writing, and not to work collaboratively toward student goals.

The project consisted of the implementation and evaluation of inservice procedures for providing literacy learners with enhanced instruction. The project was unique and innovative in that adult literacy learners participated with their volunteer tutors in an inservice workshop. It was also unique and innovative in that the instructor provided instruction and modeling which was followed by hands-on experience by the participants. Tutors and students learned exemplary practices in reading and writing instruction based on a whole-language approach. The use of hands-on, collaborative experience was also intended to promote instruction oriented toward student goals and evaluative portfolios. A total of 99 participants, consisting of 48 tutors and 51 students, received inservice support.

The project activities took place within twelve months. The autumn months were devoted to planning the schedule of inservice workshops and identifying the sites where they

would be given. The workshops were given from the first week of January through the beginning of June.

Staff members involved in the project through presenting workshops included Anita Pomerance, project director; Martha Merson, tutor trainer; Camille Realo, tutor trainer and coordinator; and Rachel Adams, tutor trainer and coordinator. Other coordinators who participated by recruiting tutors and adult learners included Tessa Lamont, Laura Mercer, Renee LaMar, and Yumy Odom-Robinson. The project was overseen by Jo Ann Weinberger, executive director, and supervised by Rose Brandt, director of educational planning.

This report is intended to provide helpful information on inservice support to trainers and coordinators of volunteer tutors, to adult literacy learners and volunteer tutors and to other providers of adult literacy services.

This project was funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs, and the report is available from AdvancE. Both programs are located at 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333.

The Problem

The need for a tutor-student inservice workshop was ascertained through coordinators' observations and dissertation research done by The Center for Literacy's tutor training coordinator for her doctorate in education. A telephone survey of 45 tutors and other observation, both informal and systematic, revealed that many tutors who had participated in the agency's regular tutor training tended, over time, to use an increasingly narrower range of teaching strategies and materials than that presented in the tutor training. Tutors tended to focus on skill-based material and on closely monitored oral reading by the student. They did little writing, and they seldom collaboratively worked toward student goals or evaluated progress toward those goals.

Goals and Objectives

The goal of this project was to test and refine a newly designed workshop to enhance the competence of tutors who had been tutoring for several months or more. Tutors and their students would receive a refresher workshop of three sessions which modeled, then allowed for hands-on experience in, whole-language approaches to reading and writing. They also would learn how to identify and select materials to work toward students' functional, daily-life goals, and how collaboratively to evaluate progress in all phases of their

reading and writing by maintaining portfolios. Students were to be included in the inservice workshops for two reasons: first, they, as well as their tutors, would learn the recommended practices and the rationale behind them; second, the tutor-student pairs could use their new learning immediately in a setting which provided support and feedback.

Six inservice workshops of three 2-hour sessions were planned to serve 48 tutors and 48 students.

Each workshop series was structured as follows:

Session 1

Staff member gives brief instructions and rationale, then models, with group participating, how to:

* Select materials, including those related to student goals, or produced by students
* Discuss text before and after reading to enhance interaction and comprehension.

Staff member gives instructions and rationale for how to:

* Use a variety of ways of reading together: Listening, silent, echo, duet, and assisted oral reading.

Tutors and students have hands-on experience, then process their experience through group discussion:

* Selecting materials
* Pre- and post-reading discussion
* Using the ways of reading just presented.

Session 2

Staff member gives brief instructions and rationale, then models, with group participating, how to:

* Establish a list of writing topics.

Staff member gives brief instructions and rationale, then tutors and students experience hands-on and process their experience through group discussion:

* The language experience approach
* Dealing with barriers such as spelling, getting started writing, then sharing and responding.

Session 3

Staff member elicits from participants their current word identification strategies, noting that they use the following:

* meaning (of the context)
* sight (how the word looks)
* sound (the sound-spelling correspondences)

Staff member gives brief instructions and rationale, then tutors and students experience hands-on:

* Teaching word identification strategies through opportunistic instruction based on the reading of whole texts.

Staff member gives brief instructions and rationale, then tutors and students experience hands-on and process through discussion:

* Identifying and planning for work toward student goals using real-life materials.

Staff member gives brief instructions and rationale, then tutors and students make the first steps toward:

* Creating and using portfolios of student-selected work as an ongoing method of evaluating progress.

Procedures Employed

Planning, evaluation and one of the workshop series took place at The Center for Literacy's headquarters. Other workshops took place in the locations normally used for tutor meetings: conference space made available by libraries, community centers, corporations and churches. All sites were accessible by public transportation. Four tutor trainers presented the workshops. Tutors and students were recruited for the sessions by their area coordinators, and the sessions were also publicized in the agency's regular newsletter.

All instruction in the workshops included brief explanations and rationale for procedures followed by modeling (when appropriate) and hands-on experience.

In the first session, tutors and students selected material and experienced the importance for comprehension of pre-reading discussion. In order to counteract the tutors' observed tendency to exclusive use of student oral reading, the participants learned and experienced several different ways of reading together. These methods included: (1) the tutor reading aloud as the student listened and followed in the text, (2) echo reading, with the tutor reading a sentence or phrase at a time, echoed immediately by the student, (3) duet reading, in which tutor and student read together, (4) silent reading to develop self-monitoring and risk-taking, and (5) oral reading by the student, with cautions to the tutor not to interrupt the reading with instruction or unnecessary corrections. Rather, tutors were encouraged to provide assistance to reduce lags which would interfere with comprehension. Instead of interruptions, "opportunistic" teaching of words after reading and discussing a selection was recommended.

In the next session, tutors and students brainstormed together for writing topics, learned and used the language experience approach, and each wrote on a topic of his or her own choosing, dealing temporarily with spelling obstacles through invented spelling, use of partial or omitted words, or asking for the spelling. Then they shared what they

wrote with the group if they wanted to, and the group responded to the content of the writing.

In the final session, tutors and students identified their own word identification strategies, with use of context recommended as the most useful strategy. They used word learning techniques based on the student's own reading materials and need for assistance. Tutors gave "mini-lessons" on words unsuccessfully attempted in context. Strategies included: (1) context use, practiced through the cloze technique of supplying deleted words, (2) memorizing by sight, using flash cards, and (3) analysis of sound-spelling patterns by looking at short lists of rhyming and similarly spelled words, and noting common patterns of irregularities, such as the spelling of the word light, when they occur. Students and tutors identified and planned for student goals and took the first steps toward using portfolios for ongoing evaluation of progress. Staff-written handouts on reading independently, writing, language experience and evaluation through portfolios were distributed to all participants. Tutors were referred to passages in The Center for Literacy's Basic Literacy Tutor Handbook.

Materials used consisted chiefly of real-life materials and whole-language texts appropriate for adult learners. Real-life materials relating to student goals were selected with the assistance of The Center for Literacy's "Goals Checklist." Reading was done in newspapers, magazines,

stories written for adult new readers, and student writings such as The Center for Literacy's publication Learning for Life.

Objectives Met

Inservice workshops were scheduled and publicized for tutors and students throughout the city. A total of 99 participants, consisting of 51 tutors and 48 students, attended. The students' attendance slightly surpassed the objective of 48, while that of the tutors met it precisely.

The workshops proceeded as planned, with tutors and students participating enthusiastically in the activities presented. The majority of the participants were unequivocally appreciative of the sessions, at the time or in interviews conducted later, as described below in the "evaluation" section of this report. Since unsolicited and solicited comments supported the training as offered, no revisions were made in the content or format of the presentations.

Objectives Not Met

The sessions in one area of the the city had to be cancelled. However, the numerical goals for tutors and students served were met by the fact that attendance in other areas exceeded expectations.

Evaluation

The success of the workshops was assessed by qualitative and quantitative means. The workshops were evaluated by the qualitative means of interviews and conversations. Participants were interviewed within a month by coordinators or by workshop presenters about what they remembered, what they enjoyed most, the impact of the sessions on their tutoring, and suggestions for improvement. These were the questions:

1. What do you remember best about the sessions?
2. What part of the sessions you attended did you find most helpful or interesting?
3. In what way did the sessions influence your teaching or learning? Did you get any new ideas of new ways of working together?
4. What would you suggest to make the sessions better? (topics, time, location, frequency?)

Some remembered best the strategies, such as the way writing was taught, the language experience approach (referred to as "student dictation"), silent reading and certain word puzzles. Other participants remembered best the attitude toward learning, using such positive phrases as "everybody pulling together," and "family-type atmosphere." Many commented on their pleasure at meeting other students and tutors and learning about their reasons for participating in the program.

Responding to the question about what was most "helpful or interesting," some tutors and students described a variety of strategies: asking questions before reading,

silent reading, duet and echo reading, flashcards, reading long words by finding smaller words in them. Others chose broader topics, such as adult learning, or discussion of the reasons people want to improve their reading.

The question about the sessions' influence was answered in detail by many. In some cases, it elicited overall evaluation, such as "very practical," or the fact that it helped because the tutor hadn't tutored much in the past. Participants told about what they were doing in their sessions, and several tutors and students described the way the student took the lead in decision-making. They also said they used the resources described in the workshops. They described a diverse range of activities, and one tutor said explicitly that she learned how to diversify her lessons. This type of response was particularly gratifying, as one of the goals of the project was to overcome the pairs' tendency not to use materials and methods presented in tutor training, as reported by tutors and substantiated by staff interviews and the tutor training coordinator's doctoral dissertation.

The final question, about how to make the sessions better, also elicited evaluative responses. Many participants had no suggestions for improvement (44%), with one student elaborating, "It's beautiful now, the way you are running things. I appreciate all the help." A tutor concurred: "Practicality is the key, all was very beneficial." Suggestions included comments on the physical

environment such as, "the church was cold," and the view that larger numbers of people should be recruited. Some wanted more help for advanced students, a topic which was outside the scope of this project, but which The Center for Literacy hopes to address in the future.

Informal comments about the inservices made during and after the sessions were supportive. A number of pairs requested the reading materials presented in the workshop to use in their tutoring sessions. Some students said the pre-reading discussions improved their comprehension. Many tutors and students said they would use the new ways of reading together in their sessions. Some said at the beginning of the workshop that they disliked writing, but later said they enjoyed doing it in the inservice.

The tutors' and students' assessment of the inservice workshops, both in conversations and in interviews, was positive, with a large proportion of the tutors and students reporting that they received new ideas for tutoring in the workshops.

The inservice workshops were also evaluated quantitatively by comparing two groups of tutoring pairs' degree of activity in June, the final month of the project year. Inservice participants were compared with a control group for each workshop. Criteria for the control group were (1) they were from the same area of the city, and (2) they had been active at the time the workshops were presented. Randomness was provided by dividing the total

number of active pairs in that area who did not attend the workshop by the number of pairs who did attend. Using that number as n, every nth pair was selected for the control group. The inservice participants and those who did not attend were compared as to total number of hours of tutoring in June. The tutoring hours of the participants in inservice workshops surpassed those of the control group by 16%, as shown below:

Hours of Instruction in June

Inservice Participants:	348
Nonparticipants:	293

By offering these inservice workshops, we hoped to give the tutors and students new ideas for materials and techniques, and overcome isolation by establishing camaraderie with other students and tutors. We hoped thus to increase the pairs' commitment to working together. In the light of these hopes, both the qualitative and the quantitative evaluations indicate that we were successful.

Distribution of the Findings

The findings, as described in this report, are available to adult literacy providers statewide. The report is on file with The Center for Literacy, Tutors of Literacy in the Commonwealth and The Pennsylvania Department of Education's AdvancE. The project director or other participating Center for Literacy staff members are

available to present the results of the study at the mid-Winter Conference of the Pennsylvania Association for Adult and Continuing Education and other national adult education conferences.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The piloting of this student-tutor inservice series established that such inservices improve the quality of service delivery. They remind tutors and students how to use whole-language approaches to reading and writing instruction, and how to incorporate student goals, everyday materials, and evaluative portfolios into their tutoring sessions. They also produce a camaraderie that can carry over into the tutoring sessions by making the pairs feel less isolated.

Recruitment is important for the success of inservice workshops. Tutors and students sometimes are reluctant to come to additional meetings, and unwilling to give up one of their sessions together. They need to understand that an inservice meeting is in itself instructional, and will make subsequent sessions more effective. They also need to be aware of the value of co-learning in breaking down emotional barriers to learning. Therefore, we recommend that student-tutor inservices be publicized personally by the coordinator. They should be planned well in advance, so that coordinators can publicize them during their routine contact with students and tutors. Eye-catching posters at

tutoring sites can serve as reminders. We recommend that those who present workshops be experienced with working with groups and well-versed in the material to be presented. They should be flexible about adapting to the group's interests. Handouts, including agendas and summaries of individual presentations, give structure and also function as memory aids. Finally, serving refreshments always helps to create a friendly and hospitable atmosphere.

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STUDENT-TUTOR INSERVICE

Session 1

AGENDA

I. Finding the Best Reading Materials

II. Building Comprehension by Talking Before and After

III. Five Different Ways to Make Reading Easy

STUDENT-TUTOR INSERVICE

Session 2

AGENDA

I. Enjoying Writing

How to Get Started

What to Do Afterward

II. Creating Your Own Reading Material

STUDENT-TUTOR INSERVICE

Session 3

AGENDA

I. Focus on Words: Three Approaches

II. Planning to Meet the Learner's Goals

III. Measuring Progress with Portfolios and Learning Logs

Goals Checklist

CAN DO	WORK ON	NO INTEREST	
			Home/Family-Related
☐	☐	☐	1. Read to children
☐	☐	☐	2. Help children with homework
☐	☐	☐	3. Read/write notes from/to child's school
☐	☐	☐	4. Read/write names of family members or friends
☐	☐	☐	5. Read/write your own address
☐	☐	☐	6. Use the phone book
☐	☐	☐	7. Write out shopping lists
☐	☐	☐	8. Read/write recipes
			Social/Business
☐	☐	☐	9. Read bills
☐	☐	☐	10. Write checks/money orders
☐	☐	☐	11. Read/write letters, notes, cards
☐	☐	☐	12. Read menus
☐	☐	☐	13. Participate more at religious services and activities
☐	☐	☐	14. Take part in committees or other meetings or neighborhood/community activities. (i.e. Scouts, block committee, Home and School, union, etc.)
☐	☐	☐	15. Participate in political activities (i.e. voting, work for candidate, read petitions, etc.)
			Self
☐	☐	☐	16. Read newspaper (articles, ads, sports page, horoscope) (specify sections read)
☐	☐	☐	17. Read magazines
☐	☐	☐	18. Read books (mysteries, sports, drama, horror, science fiction, romance, history, religion, child care, cookbooks, hobbies, interests, other)
☐	☐	☐	19. Read/write poetry or song lyrics
☐	☐	☐	20. Write a journal, diary, story of your life or other kinds of stories
☐	☐	☐	21. Read labels, notices, signs and billobards
☐	☐	☐	22. Read driver's manual/get a license
☐	☐	☐	23. Read maps
☐	☐	☐	24. Math

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CAN DO	WORK ON	NO INTEREST	
☐	☐	☐	25. Get a GED or HS diploma
☐	☐	☐	26. Go to college or technical school
			Job-Related (as applicable)
☐	☐	☐	27. Study/train for particular kind of job: Examples, if helpful: health care, child care, education, computers, service, business, sales, building construction, automotive, law enforcement, law, city work, fashion, other
☐	☐	☐	28. Fill out forms, job applications, other applications
☐	☐	☐	29. Read help wanted ads
☐	☐	☐	30. Get a (better) job
☐	☐	☐	31. Take a test for a job (i.e. Civil Service)
☐	☐	☐	32. Get into the armed forces
☐	☐	☐	33. Work for yourself or manage own business
☐	☐	☐	34. Read employee benefits pamphlet
☐	☐	☐	35. Read/write names of co-workers
☐	☐	☐	36. Read/write specific occupational vocabulary
☐	☐	☐	37. Write supply/inventory lists
☐	☐	☐	38. Read/write notes from/to co-workers
☐	☐	☐	39. Take notes at meetings (i.e. union, staff)
☐	☐	☐	40. Write work reports/end-of-shift logs
☐	☐	☐	41. Did we miss anything that you're interested in working on?

Sources for practical application of reading and writing skills include maps, travel folders, menus, letters, greeting cards, signs, crossword puzzles, catalogs, magazines and song sheets.

You and your student may want to take some field trips in order to apply "booklearning" to real situations. Some places to visit include libraries, clinics, museums, grocery stores, restaurants, public transportation, and various agency offices.

One of the best ways to insure that your student will keep coming back is to include lots of practical learning in each lesson.